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THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

FEBRUARY 1st, 1854.

Music in this Number.

A LITTLE SONG OF THANKFULNESS,
Composed by JOHN PARRY.

AN EFFUSION UPON CREAM, AND A DESIDERATUM IN ENGLISH POETRY.

By LEIGH HUNT.

IN the *Musical Times* of the month before last there was a quotation from the writer of this article, enumerating the enjoyments proper to the season of Christmas. A Somersetshire reader complains of its having taken no notice of the great West-of-England luxury, cream; and he imposes on us, by way of penalty, the task of doing justice to the merits of that enchanting eatable.

We thank him for so very pleasant a punishment; though the fact is, that like many an accused author before us, we are not in fault; cream, however identified with Christmas in the west, being not at all so in the east, or in any other part of the kingdom. We doubt whether the gentleman will find mention of the word in any book on the subject, ancient or modern. Certainly he will not, in the two great authorities, Brand and Ellis. The thing itself, in truth, does not particularly belong to the season, however justly it is brought into it by those among whom it abounds. It is rather a summer than a winter dish.

"Oh the cooling curds and cream!"

says the song in the *Guardian*. When Perdita in the *Winter's Tale* (which is a tale of summer-time) is spoken of as the queen of those pastoral possessions—

("Good sooth, she is
The queen of curds and cream")

it is at the merry-making of a sheep-shearing. So in Dyer's poem of the *Fleece*,—

"Steep'd grain, and curdled milk, with dulcet cream
Soft temper'd, in full merriment they quaff:"

that is, the sheep-shearers. Creams may be enjoyed all the year round; and you may give them a summer zest in winter-time by the heat of dining-rooms, of fires, and of wines; but the true, natural, unsophisticate coolness of them comes best in summer-time.

It is, however, a very pleasant subject to write of, summer or winter. The mere thought of it is a luxury; the mention of the word a subject for mutual congratulations of the memory. We fancy the readers of the *Musical Times* (by

some instinctive agreement as to the disposition of the parts) all striking up some chorus in honor of it;—some tribute to the glory of May-day and milking pails.

Do justice to cream! How easy as well as delightful is it not to do that?—to do justice to a thing which by its look, taste, and association with every pastoral beauty, every luxury unspoil, does so much justice to itself:—

"So sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses."

Cream is the flower, or rather the fruit, the consolidation as well as consummation, the topmost, richest, and best portion, of one of the best and most comprehensive of all things,—milk, which contains in its single self the elements of whatsoever is nourishing, and represents the gentleness, innocence, and first divine intention of whatsoever is fittest to be nourished. Eve, according to the poet, "tempered dulcet creams" in Paradise. Cream is the best specimen left us of the cookeries of the Golden Age; and the ghosts of Ovid and Hesiod ought to blush at their having had no name for it;—unless, indeed, they meant to imply that it was a thing ineffable, unspeakable,—something to be devoutly swallowed without mentioning, as the *tiddest* bit,—say, rather, the most luxurious mouthful, of the food of gods; otherwise, if the laws of etymology allowed, we should say, that the secret name for it with the Greeks, and that which has transpired to us in our own and other modern forms of the word through the Gothic language, was *Chrema*, which to the uninitiated meant simply use, business, profit, amount, income, goods and chattels, or some such utilitarian view of the "cream of the thing;" but in the beautiful or transcendental sense of it, it is manifest to unsophisticate ears what the sound refers to. The Gothic word, the dictionaries inform us, is Kreima, and hence the like word among the nations of Christendom. The Italians have a supertranscendentally named ice, called *Crema di Burro*,—Cream of Butter!—though why it is so called, we never could make out. We do not profess to have instituted any very deep enquiries into the matter, practical or theoretical; but we could never discover that it amounted to any thing more than what the cookery books call Almond Cream; for almonds always make a part of it, though it is flavored occasionally with coffee, chocolate, or vanilla. Cream of Butter ought to mean something sublimated into butter ultra-butyral;—butter thrice or twenty times butterified;—but this is not the case with *Crema di Burro*. Perhaps the appellation was the cream of some jest, or *make-believe*; for cream is the top of any thing, real or metaphorical. Being so good and superior in itself, it symbolizes every thing else that is superior; which is one of the reasons (to conclude

this very learned part of the subject) why we never could believe, that Fletcher, in his *Faithful Shepherdess*, meant *nuts*, or at any rate, *nuts* only, when he spoke of them as—

“that meat,
Which the great god Pan doth eat.”

He might have meant the above qualification of cream, called almond cream; but as modern customs have the most ancient origins, and as the word Pan, by the common consent of the learned, is a very mysterious word, embracing every possible thing in nature,—and therefore most emphatically and as the very core of the mystery, embracing itself,—we have come to the conclusion, that when the Satyr in Fletcher's play presents a variety of primæval food to the Shepherdess, some verses have been lost in the passage previous to those which we have quoted, and that these lost verses prefigured, or represented rather, a dish which is now about to make its annual resurrection upon the world, circular as the motion of the world, hot as its sun, sweet as cream and sugar can make it, and perfected in its harmony with lemon, after the fashion of the concordant discords of the universe,—*Pancake*. Yes; this and no other, as you may see by its very name, and by that of the vessel in which it is concocted, this,

“*This* is of that meat,
Which the great god PAN doth eat!”

Valentine Day, or the day on which birds pair and lovers communicate, is the signal for the renewal of the world; and Pancake Day is the day on which it is shewn how the world is to be nourished and carried on,—namely, by milk and eggs; *ergo*, by cream, as the cream of the whole business. We are aware that penitence pretended to appropriate the day; and we do not mean to speak lightly of that matter; for penitence is an excellent thing, provided it repent of what it ought to be sorry for and immediately begin to leave it off; for the proof of that sort of pudding is in the non-eating. But it is very remarkable that the penitence has gone, and the Pancake alone remained; which shows that the penitence was not a real penitence, being one not calculated to endure; while, on the contrary, the Pancake offers the solidest and sweetest proofs of its being qualified to last without ceasing.

A thing of cream, Sir, is a joy for ever.

We should like to know what a microscopic animal, a million times less than a human being, but gifted with human perceptibilities, would think of a giant of a man in summer time, on a hot noon, and after a fatiguing walk, devouring a lake of cream, studded with islands of strawberries. We picture to ourselves heavens of futurities (or try to do so), and are not aware that we have already got bits of them in advance, provided we did but know it. We quarrel, and emulate, and grudge; and so make a chaos of

the rich and harmonious world. Cream ought to teach us better, in softening whatever it lights upon. Creams are the perfecters of sweets, the reconcilers of contradictions, the harmonizers of sweets and sour, the resolvers of the discords of raspberry and currant tarts, the enrichers of teas and coffees, of soups, of patties, of vegetables, the shewers of the difference between the common host and the uncommon (if he can afford it), the winners of the heart of your aunt, the final satisfiers of your uncle (properly so called), the balmy settlers of grandmothers, the astonishers of little children (who think it a kind of heavenly butter), the delights equally of fairy land and of land real, of prince and of peasant, of infant and of old man. Junkets (of which Fairy Mab ate) are cream-cheeses in baskets. The infant takes to cream naturally, like an angel; the old man takes a prodigious mouthful of it, triumphing over his toothlessness, and resting, in that potentiality, on beatitude.

What shall we add, or how complete the task of justice that we have undertaken? Alas! people too often take the will for the deed; thinking how easy it is to do a thing, till they are in the middle of the endeavour; and then perhaps they are relieved beyond their deserts, and Fortune drops in and completes it for them. This has luckily been our case; for, coming to a stand hereabouts, with other thoughts intervening, and fearing that we should not be able to do the justice we had bragged of, even to this encouraging subject, (perhaps because we are not valiant enough in point of health to venture upon eating the luxury of which we talk, and so have forfeited the right of completing its eulogy) there suddenly presented itself to our eyes, in the *Manchester Examiner*, the following charming effusion of animal spirits, which adds all that we could have desired to add on the subject, and which is of a class of writing which it is much easier to think easy than to find so. Let any one who supposes otherwise, and who is not accustomed to consider this species of composition, try, with a running pen, or with any pen that does not feel itself full charged with its subject, to snatch the swift and happy flow of its manner and matter, the fancies never wanting, the rhymes never forced, the words never out of their places, and their whole felicity of a thing which the author himself perhaps may consider a trifle, (for such conclusions are not unnatural to powers so genial,) but which nobody else has a right so to regard, in any sense of the word that implies commonness or want of value.

Such readers as possess animal spirits of their own, need not be told, that the verses, in order to have justice done to them, particularly if read aloud, should be congenially dealt with, uttered frankly and jovially, without halt or misgiving,

especially at the words the least usual, for those are the most off-hand of all, and the most born of the occasion. Then, towards the close, will gradually come a *cadenza*, suitable to the turn which the thoughts take,—not ostentatiously or affectedly modulated, but naturally and with a manly tenderness, such as you might imagine the writer (whoever he is, for we know him not) might feel, while laying his hand at parting on some gentle and respected hand before him, as it lay on a table.

Readers of another sort, however sensible of the merits of poetry in general, yet if unused to the consideration of writing like this (which indeed is of a very unusual sort in this northern climate), will do well to entrust its delivery to the former; allowing themselves to be carried along with it, as they would with an air from Italy or France; and taking for granted, what we can assure them from observation of the fact, that verses of less merit than these, but of the same class of uncontrolled and joyous utterance, are great favorites to this day in the south of Europe, and this too not only with the humblest but the highest people; indeed in proportion to the height of their perceptions, and their superiority to the dull mistake of confounding animal spirits with silliness:—

A CAN OF CREAM FROM DEVON.

"Rich and rare were the gems she wore,"—
But that I believe you have heard before.
The gems may be rich, and the gems may be rare,
But this I solemnly do declare,—
That nothing on earth, or in poet's dream,
Is so rich and rare as your Devonshire cream.
Its orient tinge, like spring-time morn,
Or baby-buttercups newly born;
Its balmy perfume, delicate pulp,—
One longs to swallow it all at a gulp.
Sure man had ne'er such gift or theme,
As your melt-in-mouth Devonshire cream.
Oh! it makes me fat, and it makes me fair,
And were I not bald, it would curl my hair;
It makes me sleek, and soft, and slippery;
It turns my thoughts from French-cook frippery;
It rises daily in my esteem,
Though sinking fast,—is this Devonshire cream.
No wonder oily monks and priests
Your city loved, when, at their feasts
Such glimpses they got of heavenly blisses,—
Such oleaginous pab as this is:
Or when to vespers dragged per force,
This was the cream of their discourse:—
Oh! rosy and cosy the good folks seem,
Who are constantly lapping this Devonshire cream!
Talk not of "worlds of chrysolite,"
Talk not of "seas of sapphire" bright;
I don't desire on *such* to float,
The boat I seek is a butter-boat:
In this let me launch on an ocean stream—
A mighty sea—of Devonshire cream!
It matters not, *then*, if I sink or swim;
It matters not what may be my whim;
Whether I float on the buoyant wave,
Or in its deeps my limbs do lave:
For oh! what a sensuous joy supreme
Would *drowning* be in this Devonshire cream!

But still whilst my pen runs on so swift,
Let me think of the *giver* as well as the *gift*.
There's a smile in her eye would make any man sigh:
A place in her heart, where all good things lie;
And gentle and pleasant her thoughts do seem;
For hasn't she lived upon Devonshire cream?
May she still go on lapping, still go on napping,
Like Sterne's kindly soul the flies "only flapping;"
Years fall like dew on her heart and her head,
Till the fruit shall have ripened, the last leaf be shed;
Then, with "folding of hands," may her spirit-dream
Be soft and sweet as her Devonshire cream.

Manchester, Dec. 1853.

HORACE.

Three things here struck us in considering these verses. First, the rarity of the kind of writing in English poetry. Second, the rarity of verses on the subject of *eating*, in any poetry. And third, the entirely satisfactory effect which is given to the mirth of animal spirits by evidence of the power to be serious,—probably, by that adjunct alone.

In English poetry, as in English prose, there is plenty of wit, plenty of humour, plenty to make you laugh, after a fashion; but the fashion is rarely of a sort to make you happy,—that is to say, not thoroughly so, not thoroughly contented either with yourself or with the writer. English animal spirits, for the most part, are too apt to turn sour, and run into satire. They are not wholly of the right sort; not good-natured or happy enough themselves, to wish to make others happy. The blood seems too thick with the climate, or with beer, or with bad wine, or with the beef and pudding. (No disparagement to either. Ours is not the pen to disparage "roast beef;" but it is within the limits of possibility that you may eat too much of it.) We have groans and satires innumerable, compared with one happy song. Even when the writer, as in Swift's banter on music, seems to be borne away by his good spirits in point of manner, (which is very seldom) the matter is still at the expense of something or somebody. You can hardly find anywhere such an effusion as the one before us; and in poems of any length the search would be all but hopeless. From Chaucer to Coleridge (both, by the way, very good-natured men) there is no poem, for instance, like that of Redi's *Bacchus in Tuscany*; none which is an effusion of pure animal spirits, and in which all the personal allusions are panegyrics.

—Voi, Satiri, lasciate
Tante frottole e tanti riboboli,
E del ghiaccio mi portate
Dalla Grotta nel Monte di Boboli.
Con alti picchi
De' mazzapicchi
Dirompetelo,
Sgretolatelo,
Infragnetelo,
Stritolatelo,
Finchè tutto si possa risolvere
In minuta freddissima polvere,
Che mi renda il ber più fresco
Per rinfresco del palato,
Or ch'io son morto-assettato.

[Hold there, you Satyrs,
Your beard-shaking chatters,
And bring me ice duly, and bring it me doubly,
Out of the grotto of Monte di Boboli.
With axes and pickaxes,
Hammers and rammers,
Thump it and hit it me,
Crack it and crash it me,
Hew it and split it me,
Pound it and smash it me,
Till the whole mass (for I'm dead-dry, I think)
Turns to a cold, fit to freshen my drink.]

The poem is all of that kind, and is nearly a thousand lines long. We have no such writing in the whole circle of English verse. Gay's congratulation to Pope on his *Return from Greece* (*i. e.* from translating Homer) has the good nature of the panegyrical part of it; but it is a poem of no length—has none of the other's dance and hurry—and is, besides, an imitation of Ariosto. Suckling's *Ballad on a Wedding* is perhaps the most charming effusion of natural spirits in the language; but that is a ballad only, and is written in a set measure. Nowhere in English have we a poem of Redi's sustained impulsiveness, vivacity, and various music. Long or short, laughing or weeping, we seem resolved to be "all unhappy together." Our laughter is saturnine, and our weeping sulky. This, it is true, is not the case with the songs of Procter (Barry Cornwall); for the spirit of the beautiful is always in them, and their greatest melancholy is of the most generous description. It is in behalf of the poor. And nobly indeed sings he, and with masculine pity, on that most melancholy subject. He has occasionally even a dithyrambical burst of enjoyment, so good, that if he had much indulged his powers that way, he might have gone nigh to denationalize the complaint in this article; or at any rate, might have set an effective example to that end. But we are speaking of the general range of English poetry, and of the character which prevails in it; and in this point of view the songs of the Irish and Scotch beat ours as much in impulsiveness, mirth, and music, as their jigs and reels do our country-dances. Witness some of the effusions of Burns, Allan Ramsay, and O'Keefe, and those of Dawson, Skinner, and Ferguson (not the Scottish Ferguson, but the author of the *Forging of the Anchor*). There is a song of Mr. Peacock's, indeed, in the novel of *Headlong Hall*, fit to match any of them in the *crescendo* and precipitation of its chorus (the reader shall have a taste of it before we have done); but we are not aware of its having its fellow. Skinner (a good clergyman, by the way), in the gaiety of his animal spirits, writing in praise of the reel of Tullochgorum (and to the tune of it), ventures such rhymes as "Philosophorum," and "Whigmegmorum;" and O'Keefe's songs in his farces take advantage of farcical license to indulge in a right native intoxication of merriment. The

very jargon of the burdens of them is replete with significance. We have no such things in English. The mere innocent compound-adjective, "melt-in-mouthy," in this *Can of Cream from Devon*, is an audacity so rare, that it will startle the ordinary critic; though nothing could possibly be more warrantable, or to the purpose. The nearest previous approach in other respects to the vivacities of Redi, is in the more important quarter of the lyric poetry of Dryden, particularly in one passage of his *Secular Masque*:—

"Then our age was in its prime,
Free from quarrel, free from crime;
A very merry, dancing, drinking,
Laughing, quaffing, and unthinking time."

Here, in these last two lines, the repetition of sound in the words "very merry" and "laughing, quaffing,"—the alliteration of "dancing and drinking," and the pleasant, unique venture of making the last word but one rhyme with the preceding verse, while the closing word is still a rhyme to the two first verses—make up altogether one of the liveliest, off-hand mixtures of modulation conceivable; and are in the truest vein of the class of writing desiderated. But what an absence of it in our poetry does the rarity of such a passage imply! The cause of such a want of good spirits in "merry England," it is not within our present purpose to investigate; but so it is, and the more is the pity.

Will nobody come to the rescue? Will no lovers of verse, with pleasant pens in their hands—no "good fellows," witty withal—who are in the habit of expressing freely the joyousness which they feel in private, do as much for us in public, and vindicate the right of the most genial of all verse-making to be called poetry? a right which the superfluous ambition of being considered "thinkers," in this already too thoughtful country, has tempted critics from whom better might have been expected, to confine to certain forms of poetry exclusively? Geniality, as Charles Lamb observed—that is to say, the impulse to enjoy, to create, and to sing—is the cause of all poetry, gay or grave; and the highest kinds of it are not the only kinds—nor do they who assume the dignity of belonging to the tribe of poets exclusively, make out their case by the assumption, however thoughtful. There are thousands of thoughts which their supposed inferiors will think as deeply as themselves, and more so, and then throw away as not worth the singing—not new enough, or true enough, or pertinent, or better than the ordinary stock of their meditations, or qualified to please repeatedly, and abide, and become that addition to the stock of the public, which distinctness of character in the writer can alone produce. The born poet is not confined to the giant—much less to those who ape the might of the giant. Even the distinctions drawn between natural and artificial poets do not settle the

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matter, for art is nature's work also : the artificial poet may speak well, and from impulse, through a sophisticate medium ; and as you can make imitators of Popes and Drydens—so you can of Wordsworths and Keatses, of Shelleys, Miltons, and old dramatists. Milton himself was in some respects an artificial poet ; for he spoke Greek and Latin, and saw Nature, to a certain extent (as Dryden beautifully expresses it), “ through the spectacles of books.” It was his nature to do so, being a man born for study and retrospection. Pope was as born a poet in his degree as Milton, and Burns as Shakspeare. Milton was born for *Paradise Lost*, Shakspeare for his plays, Pope for the town and the *Rape of the Lock*, and Burns for the burn-side and *Tam o'Shanter*. You could make a Pope or a Burns as little as you could make their betters, and an O'Keefe as little as any of them ; and they will all last, and be marked men of their kind, and valued as originals accordingly, while thousands of the contemners of the least of them will have come to nothing.

On all these accounts, we trust that “ Horace ” of the *Manchester Examiner* (more genial in some respects than his great namesake, who, though an admirable, was a timid poet, afraid of opinion, and would not have ventured, for the life of him, on making a dithyrambical compound epithet), will cultivate forthwith the vein that he possesses ; giving us more off-hand verses when the humour is upon him, and thus helping to raise a new set of writers among us, who shall supply to the poverty-stricken *Allegro* portion of English poetry what has been abundantly, and superabundantly, done for the *Penseroso*.

The two other points we spoke of—the Eating Songs, &c.—we reserve for another paper next month, when we shall return to this subject of Joyous Impulse in Verse-Writing, and present the reader with two or three more of the few, the very few specimens, which at present exist of it in the language.

NOTICE.

Our next publication will appear on the 15th of February, and fortnightly afterwards on the 1st and 15th of every month until August.

MOZART'S REQUIEM MASS.

From “ The Life of Mozart,” by EDWARD HOLMES.

It was during the composition of the *Zauberflöte* that the eruption of those symptoms which portend decay of the vital powers, and a general breaking up of the constitution, first appeared. As usual, he grew interested in his work, and wrote by day and night ; but not as formerly, with impunity. He sank over this composition into frequent swoons, in which he remained for several minutes before consciousness returned. His health suffered so much, that in the month of June (1791), he suspended for a time

his labours on the *Zauberflöte*, and made a short excursion to Baden. There he produced his *Ave verum corpus*, a strain of such calm but exalted religious feeling, as may well interpret his sensations in sickness and solitude. The *Zauberflöte* is entered in his catalogue as finished in July, though it was not performed till the 30th of September, after the composer's return from Prague. That it was not quite finished, however, at that time, but submitted to various alterations and additions, which rendered the *Zauberflöte*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, and the *Requiem*, contemporaneous subjects of thought, will presently appear.

And now comes one of the most curious incidents in his life. Early in August, the composer was one day surprised by the entrance of a stranger, who brought him a letter without any signature, the purport of which was to inquire whether he would undertake the composition of a requiem, by what time he could be ready with it, and his price. The unknown expressed himself on this occasion in a manner as flattering as it was mysterious. Mozart, who was never accustomed to engage in any undertaking without consulting his wife, related to her the singular proposition made to him, adding, that he should much like to try his hand in a work of that character, as the elevated and the pathetic in church music was his favorite style. She advised him to accept the engagement ; and he accordingly wrote an answer, stating his terms for the composition, excusing himself from naming the precise time of its completion, but desiring to know where it should be sent when finished. In a few days the messenger returned, paid twenty-five ducats, half the price required, in advance, and informed the composer that as his demand was so moderate he might expect a considerable present on completing the score. He was to follow the bent of his own genius in the work, but to give himself no trouble to discover who employed him, as it would be in vain. On the departure of the stranger he fell into a profound reverie ; then, suddenly calling for pen, ink, and paper, began to write. He had not proceeded far, before his progress was interrupted by the commission to compose the opera for the coronation of the Emperor Leopold, at Prague. The subject proposed by the council of the Bohemian nobility was *La Clemenza di Tito*. The whole idea of this opera seems to have been unreasonably deferred, and the work was now to be completed on an emergency. About the 18th of August he set off for Prague, accompanied by his wife, and his pupil Süssmayer ; he commenced the composition in his travelling carriage, and finished it at Prague in eighteen days. He carried with him a number of little slips of ruled paper, on which he noted various subjects to be afterwards amplified. Such was the nature of his travelling labors, now, from the great diversion of his thoughts, unusually necessary as an aid to memory. The unaccompanied recitative, that is to say, the dialogue merely accompanied by a pianoforte, was wholly committed to Süssmayer.

Just as Mozart and his wife were entering their travelling carriage for Prague, the stranger who had brought the commission for the requiem suddenly re-appeared. “ How will the requiem proceed now ? ” he inquired. Mozart excused himself on account of the necessity of the journey, and the impossibility of giving intelligence of it to his anonymous employer ; but expressed his determination to make the work his first care on his return. This assurance gave satisfaction, and they separated.

In this anecdote, which it must be admitted, is abundantly mysterious and provocative, we have the source of the supernatural origin to which the *Requiem* is popularly ascribed. To a man in Mozart's condition of weakness and melancholy, which by degrees filled him with prepossessions approaching insanity, the unexpected appearance of the bearer of this ghostly commission from a concealed hand, might easily suggest that it was a communication from the other world.

Throughout the whole of his visit to Prague, Mozart was